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Sieber

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[54] **SKI CARRIER**

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[51] **Int. Cl.**[5] **A45F 3/04**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **224/209;** 224/208; 224/258; 224/259; 224/250; 224/917; 224/151; 224/153; 294/147

[58] **Field of Search** 224/257, 258, 259, 202, 224/208, 209, 917, 250, 150, 151, 153; 294/147, 157

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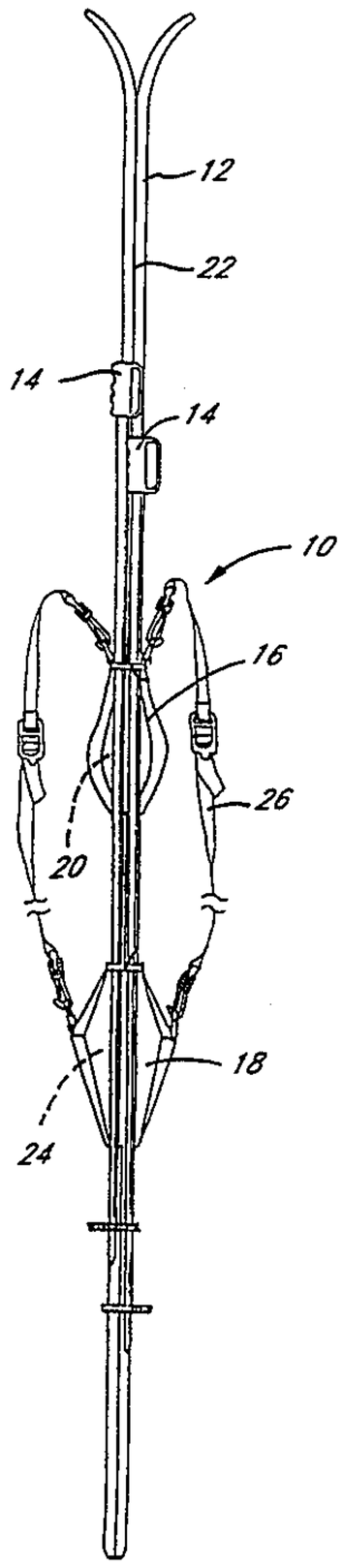
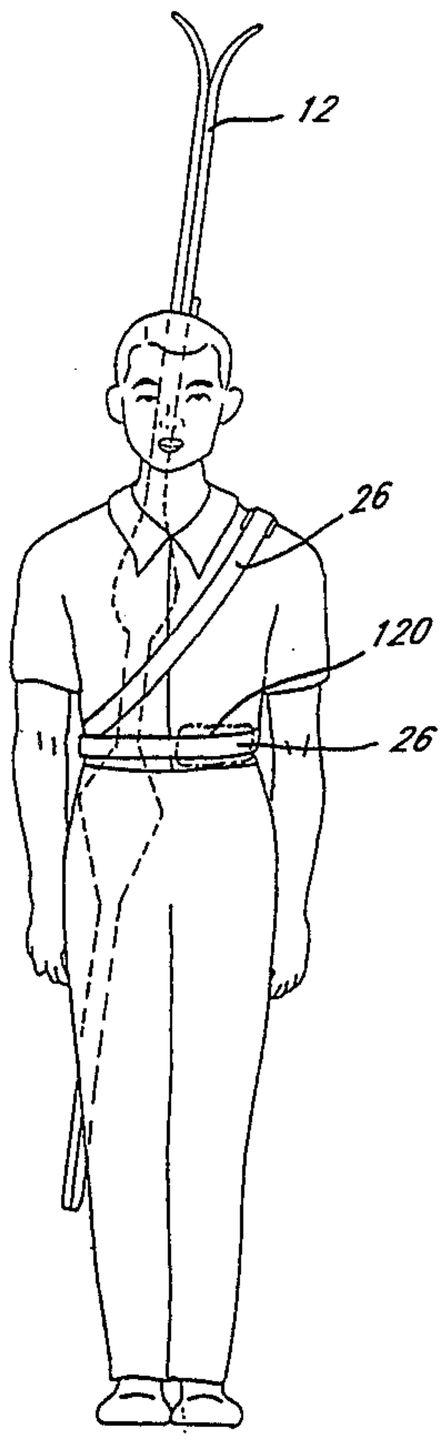
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A ski carrying device enables a skier to carry his or her skis and ski poles on the skier's back thereby freeing the skier's hand. The ski carrying device includes an upper cover and a lower cover. The skier wraps the upper and lower covers around the toe bindings and the heel bindings of the skis, respectively, with the skis positioned in a bottom-to-bottom arrangement. Each cover includes a strap which the skier wraps around the ski poles to hold the ski poles against the skis. The carrying device further includes a pair of shoulder straps, each strap connected to and extended between the upper cover and the lower cover. The skier places the straps over his or her shoulders to support the skis on the skier's back. In this position, the skier easily carries the skies and poles without using his or her hands. Furthermore, the skis worn on the skier's back are less likely to strike other persons or objects. The skier can also quickly compact the ski carrying device into a carrying pouch which the skier can unobtrusively wear around his or her waste when skiing.

17 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets





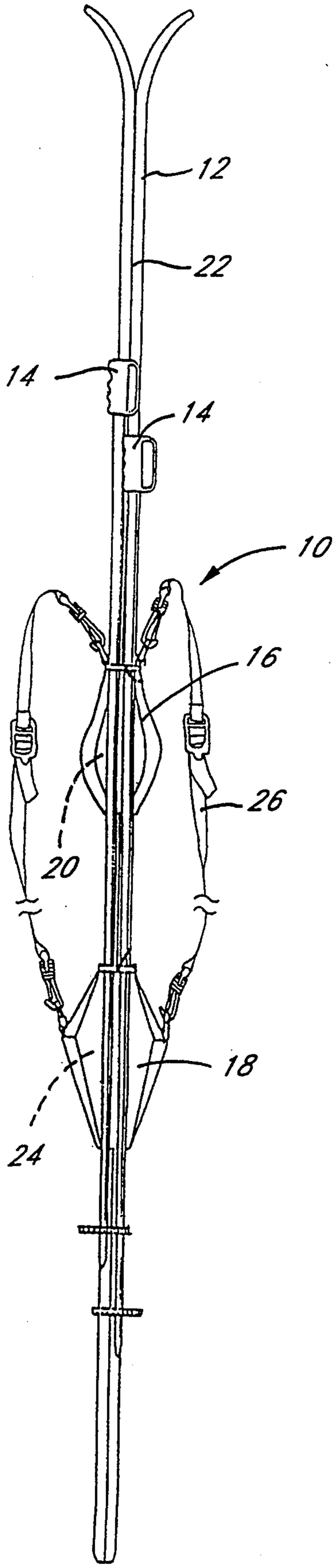


FIG. 1

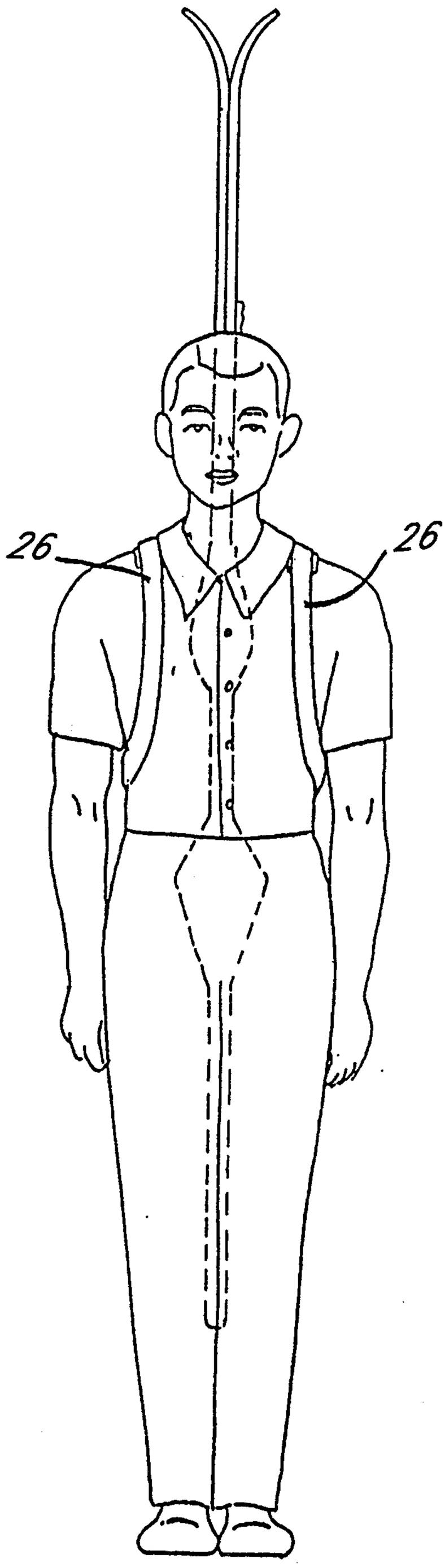
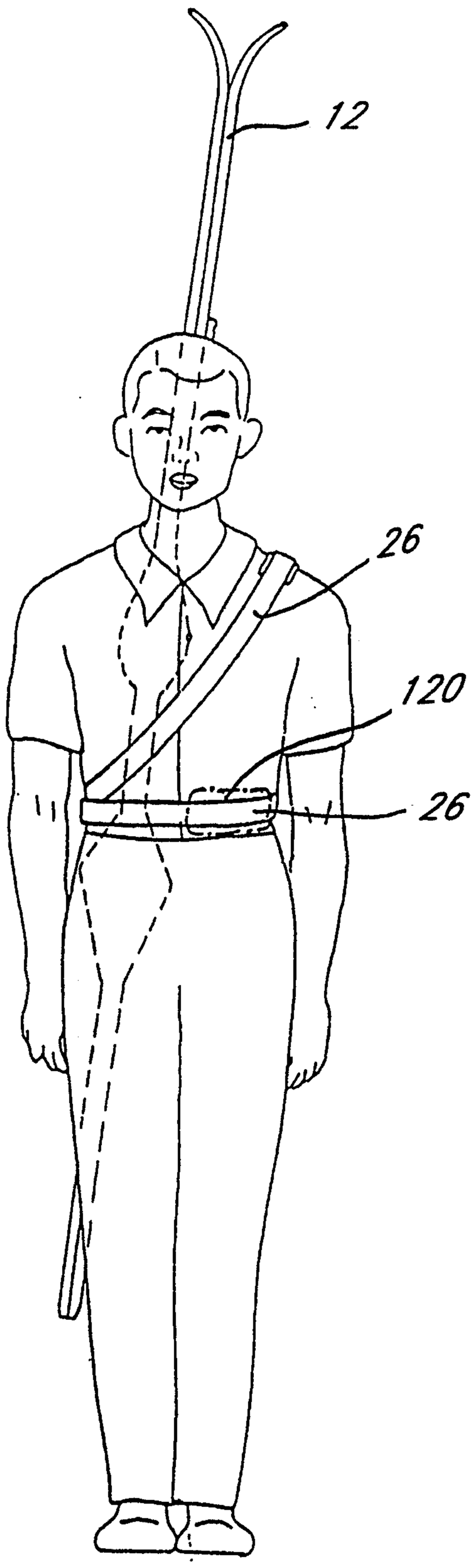


FIG. 2



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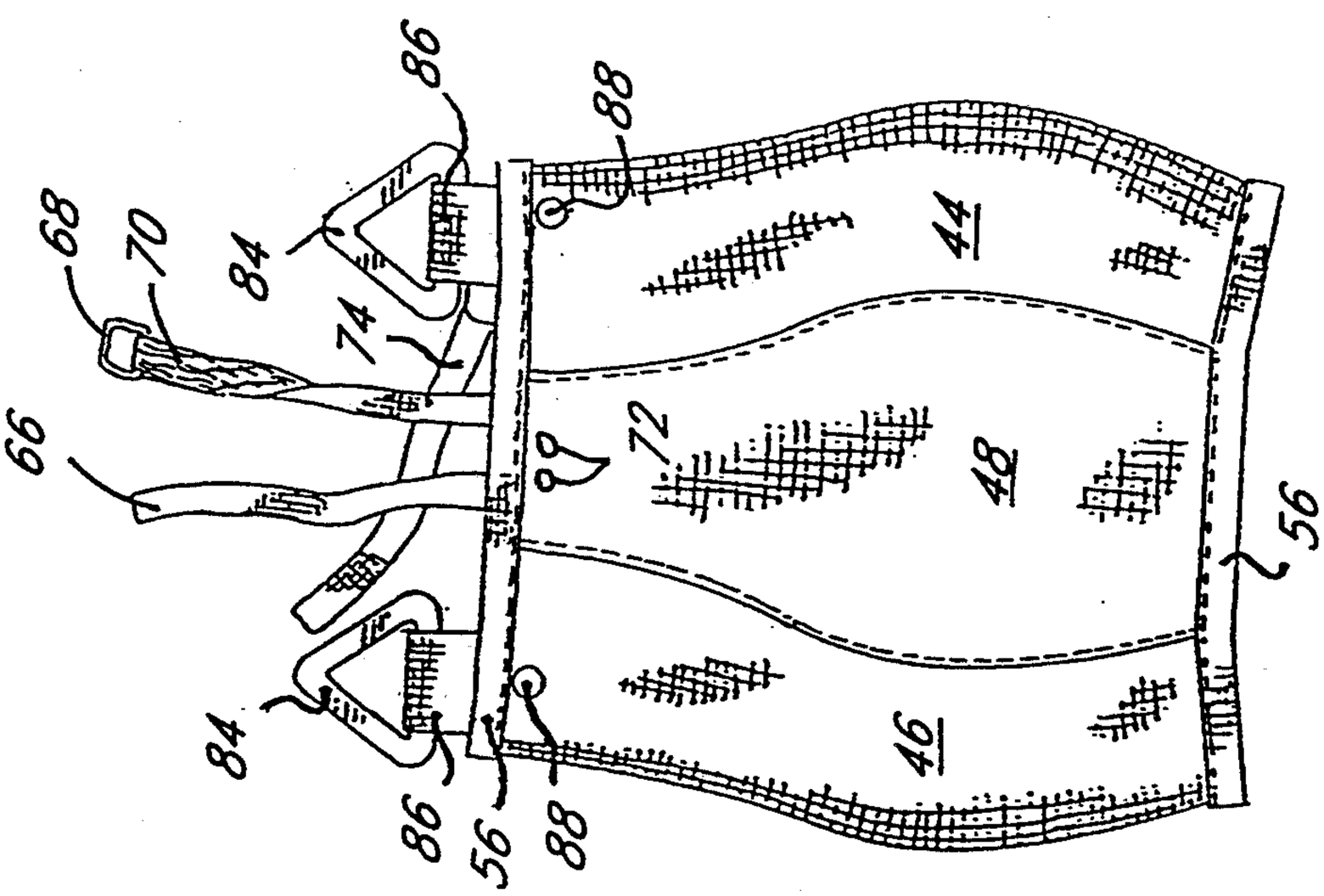
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FIG. 5

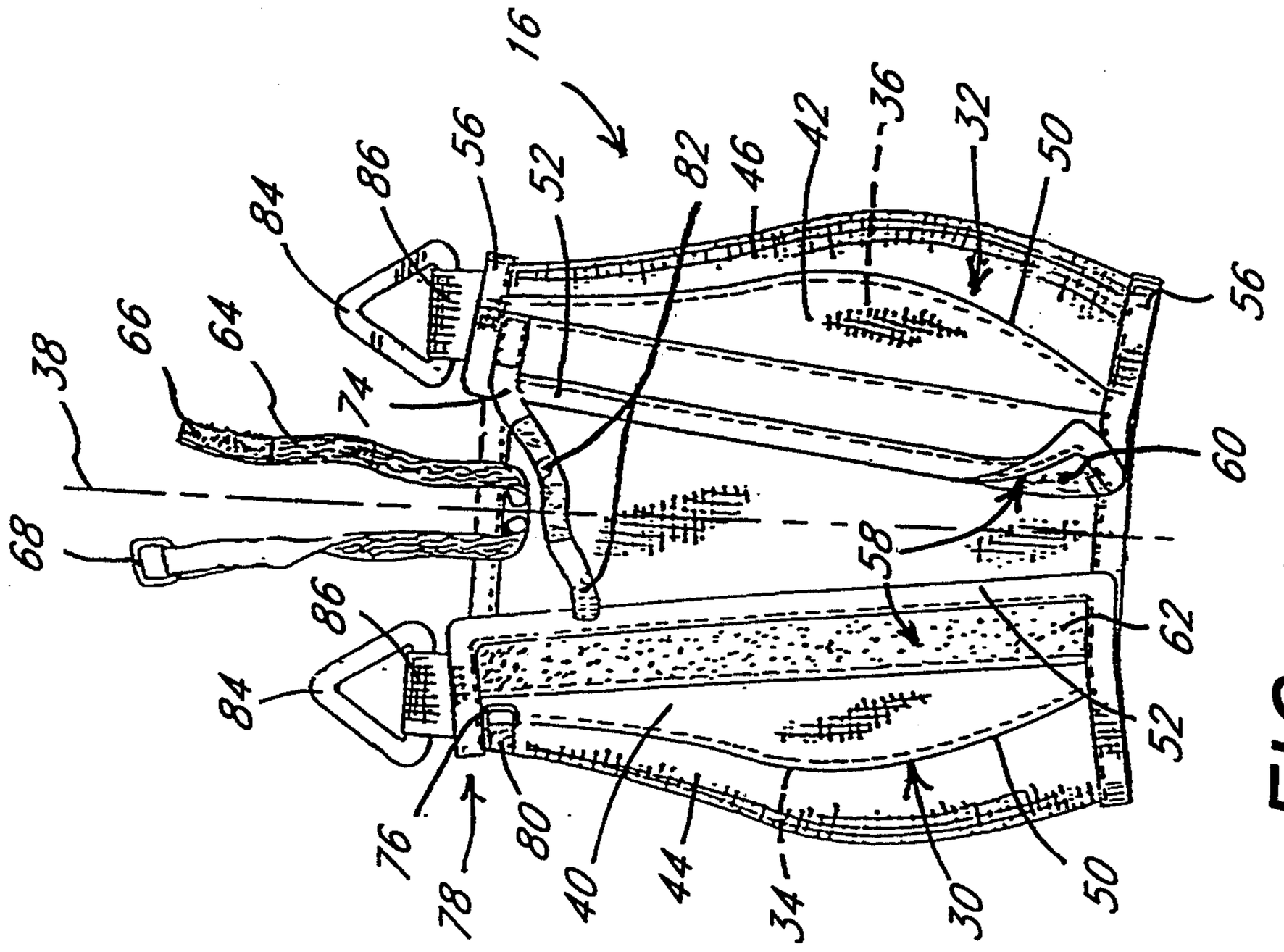
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FIG. 4

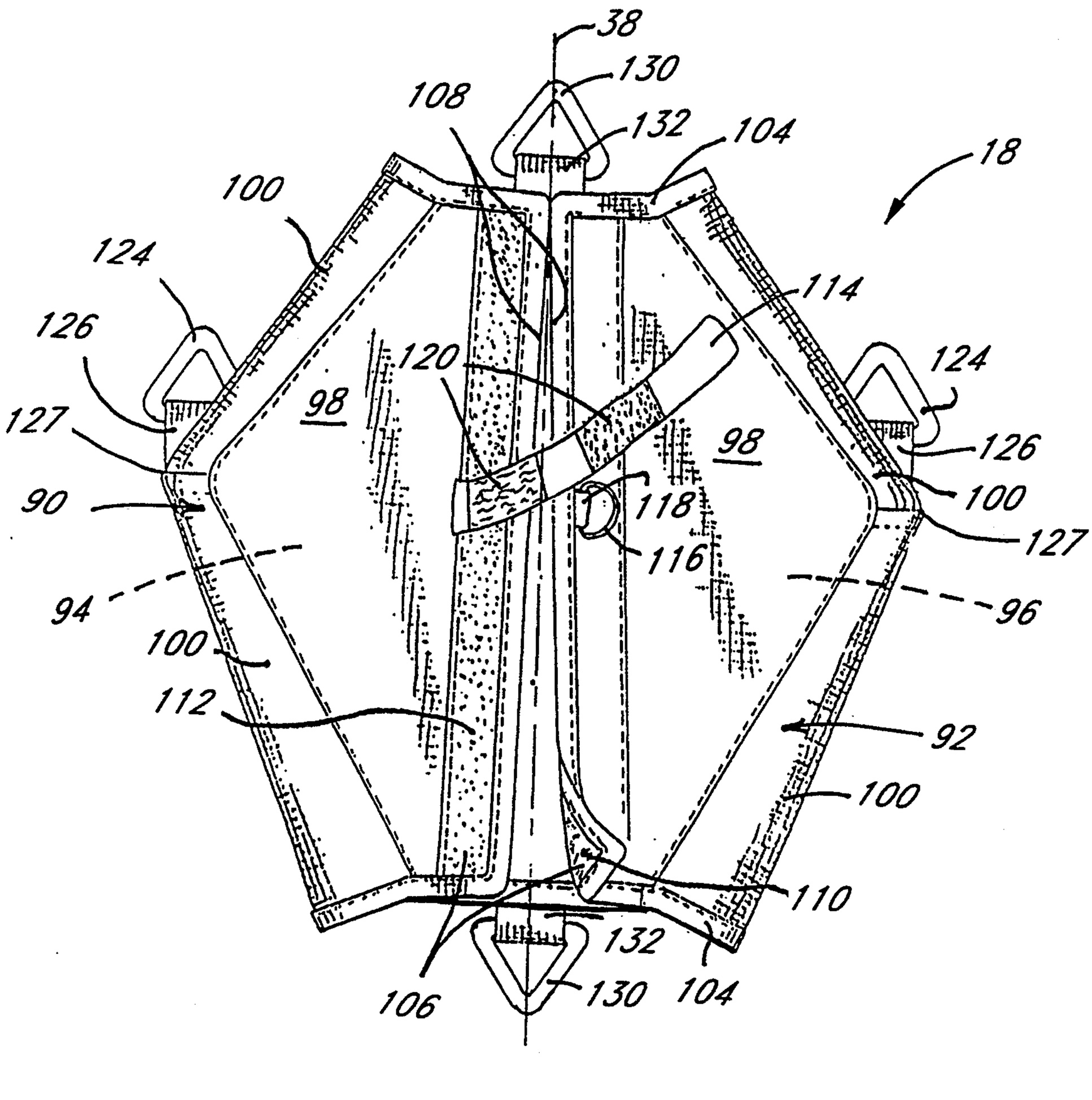
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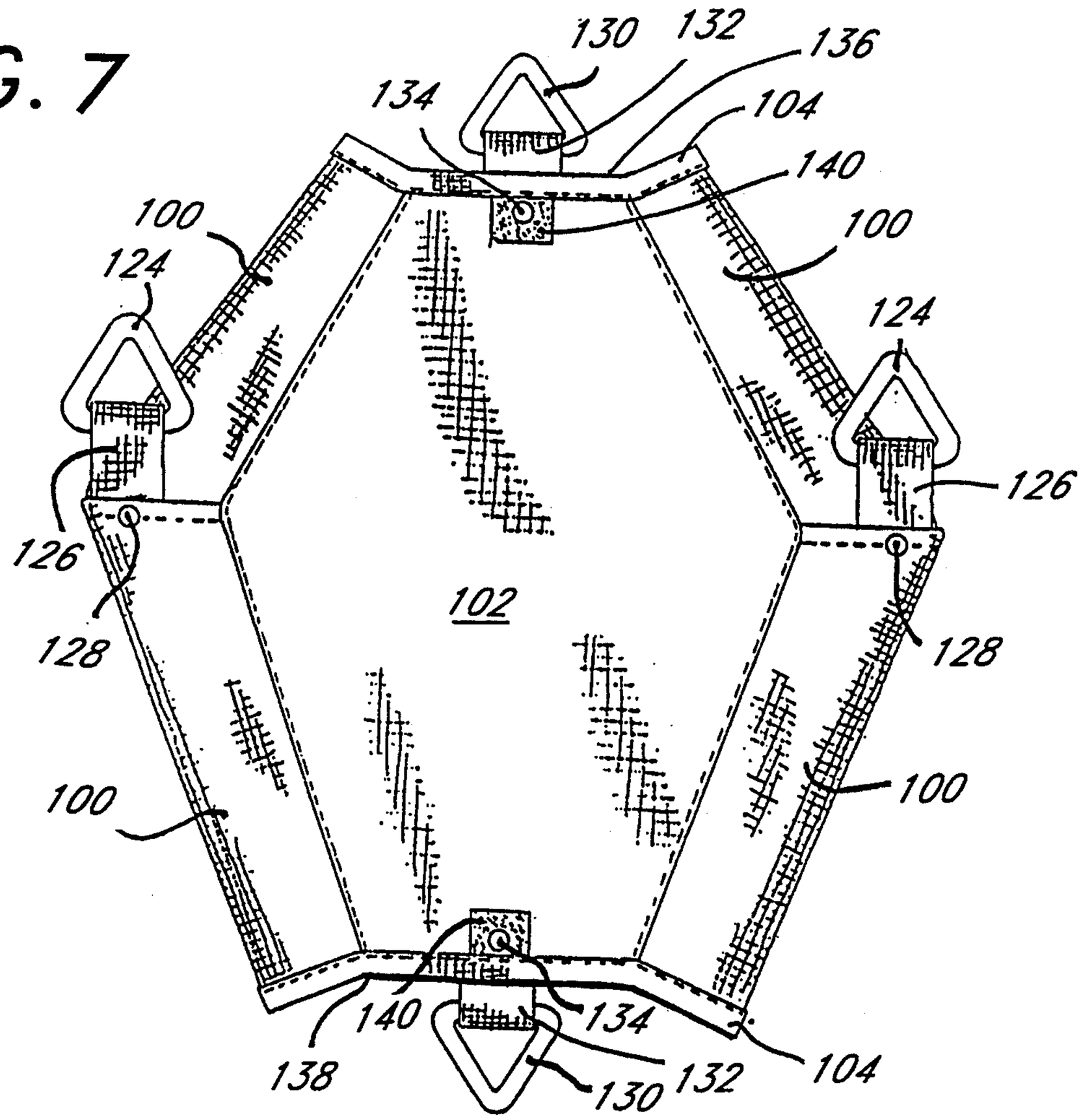
FIG. 6

FIG. 7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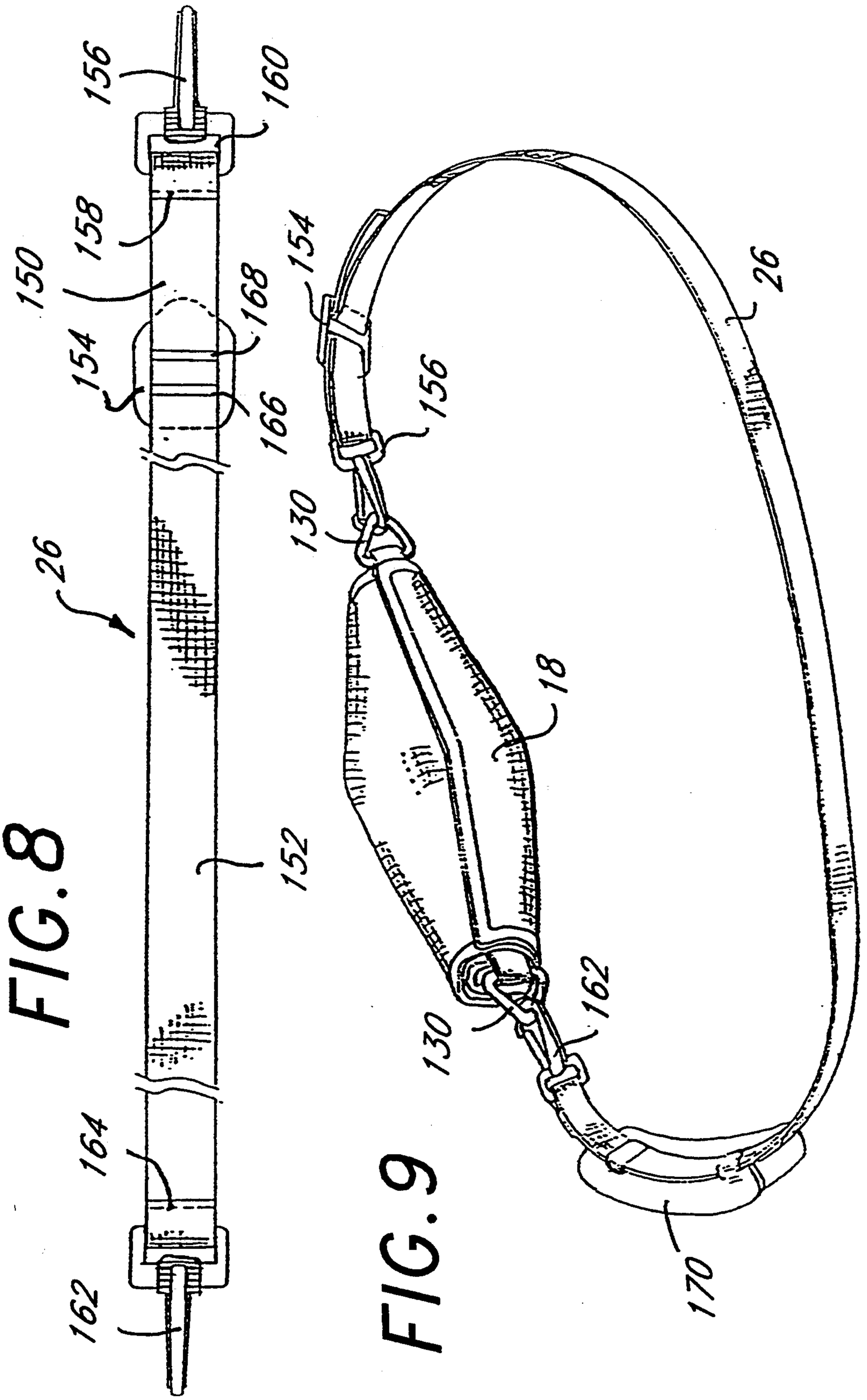
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FIG. 8

FIG. 9

SKI CARRIER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to snow skiing equipment, and more particularly to ski equipment carrying devices.

2. Description of Related Art

Millions of people in the United States and throughout the world currently enjoy snow skiing. The sport's popularity in recent years, however, has overcrowded many ski resorts and facilities. Such crowds not only frustrate skiers on the slopes, but also pose problems to skiers off the slopes.

Large crowds increase the possibility of ski equipment theft when skiers wonder away from their equipment to eat or rest. Although the skier would like to keep his or her equipment close at hand, the cumbersome and awkward nature of the equipment prohibits the skier from carrying the equipment with him or her when eating, buying lift tickets or resting in a lounge or on a patio. Thus, the skier must leave the equipment in a common area, such as against a wall of the lodge, and hope that no one steals his or her skis.

In addition, when the skier props his or her skis between a wall and a cement or asphalt pathway, as skiers commonly do, the skier generally chips or dings the edges and tails of the skis. Many skiers also unstably position their skis against such structures, and the skis consequently fall, further damaging the skis.

Large crowds also present obstacles for skiers carrying their skis through the crowd. Skis typically range from 150 to 210 centimeters (cm) in length for adult sizes and are difficult to maneuver due to their length. Many skiers find the task of transporting their skis through a crowd of skiers additionally frustrating and many people or objects are struck by errantly directed ends of skis or ski poles.

Moreover, many adventurous skiers prefer to ski less crowded terrains off official ski runs. To reach these locations, adventurous skier often times must hike up slippery slopes or over rocky terrain to reach a desired location. Most skiers have difficulty traversing such terrain with their hands holding their ski poles and skis. These skiers commonly use the ends of skis and ski poles as canes to support themselves as they hike; consequently, the skiers damage their ski equipment. Further, many skier slip and fall without the use of their hands during the sometimes treacherous journey to the desired slope.

Prior ski toting devices do not enable skiers to easily transport their ski equipment through crowds or over rough terrain. In addition, the prior ski toting devices require the skier to use at least one hand, either to hold the device or to maintain a shoulder strap on the shoulder of the skier. The prior devices further do not easily and quickly attach to the skis and poles, and are not easily and unobtrusively carried by the skis. Furthermore, these devices are not easily stored when skiing.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

One aspect of the present invention provides a ski carrying device for carrying a pair of skis on a skier's body. Thus, the skier can transport his or her ski equipment without occupying his or her hands, letting the skier use his or her hands to support the skier when traversing treacherous terrain or when eating or buying

lift tickets. In addition, the skier does not have to set the skis on the ground to free his or her hands, thus reducing the possibility of damaging the skis. Furthermore, the skier is less likely to strike other skiers or objects with his or her skis when the skis are supported in a generally vertical on the skier's body.

The carrying device in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention includes a harness, such as a cover, configured to surround the skis proximate to the ski's bindings with the bottom surfaces of the skis juxtaposed. The harness including means for securing the harness to the skis. The carrying device additionally includes a pair of straps which allows the skier to carry the skis. The straps connecting to the harness such that the skier either can wear both straps over the skier's shoulders or can wear one strap over the shoulder and the other strap around the skier's waist.

In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the ski carrying device includes an upper cover configured to encompass a pair of ski toe bindings with the bottoms of the skis juxtaposed. The upper cover also including a fastener to secure the upper cover to the skis. The carrying device further includes a lower cover configured to encompass a pair of ski heel binding. The lower cover also includes a fastener for securing the lower cover to the skis. A strap connects between the covers and allows the skier to carry the skis. The strap is desirably positioned such that with the strap worn over the skier's shoulder, the skier can positioned the skis generally vertically in an unobtrusive position.

In a preferred embodiment the carrying device includes a pair of straps worn by the skier to support the skis on the skier's back. In addition, the carrying device includes at one retention strap to secure a pair of ski poles to the carrying device.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, a ski carrying device includes an upper cover and a lower cover. The lower cover is configured to fold into a pouch having a sufficient size to receive the upper cover. The upper and lower covers form a compact bundle for storage with the upper cover inserted into the pouch formed by the lower cover. The ski carrying device additionally includes a strap which is removably connected to the upper cover and the lower cover such that the strap functions as a shoulder strap with the strap connected to the upper and lower covers. The strap also functions as a waist band with the strap connected to the lower cover at both ends of the strap.

In accordance with a preferred method of carrying skis in an unobtrusive position upon a skier's body, the method involves juxtaposing the bottom surfaces of the skis such that the corresponding sections of the bindings interconnect. A skier then wraps an upper cover around the toe bindings of the skis and secures the upper cover to the skis. The skier also wraps a lower cover around the heel bindings of the skis and secures the lower cover to the skis. The skier then attaches a pair of carrying straps to the upper cover and to the lower cover and pulls the straps over the skier's shoulders with the skis resting against the skier's back. When wearing the carrying device, the skier positions the skis in a generally vertical, unobtrusive position.

In a preferred method, the skier also compacts the carrying device to a small compact pouch. The skier first removes the ski carrying device from the skis. Thereafter, the skier inserts one side portion of the lower cover into an opposing side portion of the lower

cover to compact the lower cover and form a pouch. The skier then inserts the upper cover and one of the straps into the pouch formed by the lower cover. With the carrying device configured in a small bundle, the skier positions the lower cover pouch at his or her waist, and attaches the compacted lower cover around the waist using one of the straps.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features of the invention will now be described with reference to drawings of a preferred embodiment with is intended to illustrate and not to limit the invention, and in which:

FIG. **1** is a side elevational view of a ski carrying device in accordance with the present invention secured to a pair of skis;

FIG. **2** is a side elevation view of a skier wearing the carrying device of FIG. **1** with carrying straps positioned over both shoulders of the skier;

FIG. **3** is a side elevational view of a skier wearing the carrying device of FIG. **1** with one carrying strap positioned over one shoulder and the other carrying strap positioned around the skier's waist;

FIG. **4** is a front elevational view of an upper cover of the carrying device of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **5** is a rear elevational view of the upper cover of FIG. **4**;

FIG. **6** is a front elevational view of a lower cover of the carrying device of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **7** is a rear elevational view of the lower cover of FIG. **6**;

FIG. **8** is a fragmentary elevational view of a strap of the carrying device of FIG. **1**; and

FIG. **9** is a perspective view of the ski carrying device of FIG. **1** converted to a hip pocket.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

FIG. **1** illustrates a ski carrying device **10** configured in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The carrying device **10** is designed to hold a pair of skis **12** together and is designed for a skier to wear over his or her shoulders to support the skis **12** on the skier's back. FIGS. **2** and **3** illustrate two alternative ways which a skier could wear the carrying device **10** described below. In both postures, the skier supports the skis **12** in a generally vertical position to reduce the obstructiveness of the skis **12**. In addition, the carrying devices **10** enables the skier to carry the skis **12** and ski poles **14** without occupying the skier's hands.

Although the figures illustrate the present invention used in connection with snow skiing equipment, it is contemplated that the present invention could be used to carry other types or recreational articles, such as, for example, snowboards, water skis, surfboards, skateboards and like articles. Thus, the present description is intended only to illustrate one form which the invention could take. It is contemplated that those skilled in the art could readily adapt the present invention to carry other types of recreational articles to achieve the advantages of the present invention.

The carrying device **10** includes a cover which surrounds the bindings of the skis **12**. As FIG. **1** illustrates, the carrying device **10** preferably comprises an upper cover **16** and a lower cover **18** to surround the corresponding portions of the ski bindings. The upper cover **16** is configured to snugly encompass the toe bindings **20** of the skis **12** when the bottom surfaces **22** of the skis **12** are juxtaposed in a manner interconnecting the binding brakes (not shown), as known in the art. Likewise, the lower cover **18** is configured to snugly encompass the heel bindings **24** of the skis **12** with the ski bottoms **22** juxtaposed.

The carrying device **10** also includes at least one carrying strap **26** which the skier wears over his or her shoulder. The carrying device **10** desirably includes a pair of straps **26**. To wear the carrying device **10** as shown in FIG. **2**, both straps **26** attach to and extend between both the upper cover **16** and lower cover **18**. To wear the ski carrying device **10** as shown in FIG. **3**, one strap **26** attaches to and extends between the upper cover **16** and lower cover **18**; the second strap **26** only attaches to the lower cover **18** and extends around the skier's waist. Those skilled in the art will also appreciate that a skier could wear the carrying device **10** in a variety of ways in addition to those described herein and that the carrying device **10** could include additional straps.

The individual components of the carrying device **10** will now be described in detail.

Upper Cover

FIG. **4** illustrates the upper cover **16** from a front side elevational view. The upper cover **16** is formed between a pair of mirror-image halves **30**, **32**, each of which define a pocket **34**, **36** of sufficient size to receive a conventional toe binding **20** of the ski **12** to which the skier attaches the upper cover **16**. However, those skilled in the art could readily customize the pockets **34**, **36** defined by the upper cover **16** for any size bindings, such as, for example, larger ski racing bindings. The halves **34**, **36** are desirably coupled together in a position placing the pockets **34**, **36** in opposition. That is, the two halves **30**, **32** define mirror-image pockets **34**, **36** positioned opposite one another on opposite sides of a central vertical plane **38**.

In an exemplary embodiment illustrated by FIGS. **4** and **5**, the halves **30**, **32** of the upper cover **16** are formed by a pair of front panels **40**, **42**, a pair of central panels **44**, **46** and a rear panel **48** which are sewed together along common edges. Each front panel **40**, **42** has a shape complementary to that of the profile of the ski toe binding **20**, and preferably has a generally rectangular shape with an arcuate-shaped, convex edge **50** extending outwardly from the panel **40**, **42**. The rear panel **48** has a shape complimentary to a shape defined by the two front panels **40**, **42** when positioned in a plane with their elongated, straight edges **52** juxtaposed. The central panels **44**, **46** have a generally rectangular shape which form arcuate surfaces when sewed to the arcuate edges **50** of the front panels **40**, **42** and the rear panel **48**.

The panels **40**, **42**, **44**, **46**, **48** preferably are formed of a lightweight, weaved, flexible material, such as, for example, a nylon or canvas cloth. In an exemplary embodiment, the panels are desirably formed of Nylon 1000 Denier Cordura, having a water-proof or water-resistant coating applied to one side. The desired Nylon Cordura is commercially available from DuPont. It is also contemplated that a layer of padding material could be sewed into the upper cover **16** to further protect the toe bindings **20**.

As FIGS. **4** and **5** illustrate, a border **56** preferably edges the outer edges of the panels **40**, **42**, **44**, **46**, **48** after the panels are sewed together. The border **56** preferably extends around the periphery of the upper cover **16**, finishing the edges of the panels for a neat appear-

ance and preventing the edges of the panels from fraying and ripping. The border **56** preferably comprises a nylon binding or tape folded in half with the outer edges of the panels positioned in the fold of the nylon binding. Positioned accordingly, the border **56** is sewed onto the panels. In an exemplary embodiment, a 0.75 inch (1.9 cm) wide nylon binding is used to edge the panels.

FIG. **4** illustrates a fastening means **58** for quickly and easily securing the upper cover **16** to the skis **12** after a skier positions the upper cover **16** around the toe bindings **20**. The fastening means **58** is preferably positioned proximate to the elongated, straight edges **52** of the front panels **40, 42**. In an exemplary embodiment, the fastener means **58** comprises a hook portion **60** and a loop portion **62** of a hook-and-loop fastener, such as VELCRO ® available commercially, which are disposed along the elongated, straight edges **52** of the front panels **40, 42** on opposing surfaces; the front panels **40, 42** preferably overlap when positioned around the toe bindings **20** so that the hook portion **60** and the loop portion **62** of the VELCRO ® strip can interconnect.

Although FIG. **4** illustrates the fastener means **58** as a VELCRO ® strip, it is understood that other fastener means, such as, for example, zippers, snaps, and the like can be used as well. Moreover, the panels could be sewed together in a sleeve-like fashion and sized to slip over the toe bindings **20** with fastener means, such as, for example, elastic bands or draw strings securing the upper cover **16** to the skis **12** and over the toe bindings **20**.

FIGS. **4** and **5** also illustrate that the upper cover **16** may include a draw strap **64** used to pull the bottom surfaces **22** of the skis **12** together. Most current skis **12** have a slight bow and, thus, when the skier juxtaposes the ski bottoms **22**, the bowed bottoms **22** form a gap most prominent proximate to the toe bindings **20**. The draw strap **64** pulls the ski bottoms **22** flush against each other such that the upper cover **16** can tightly surround the skis **12** with the bottom surfaces **22** juxtaposed.

The draw strap **64** preferably is nylon and comprises a section of VELCRO ® hook portion **66** positioned at one end and a plastic ring **68** sewed to the other end, as known in the art. The strap **64** further includes a section of VELCRO ® loop portion **70** positioned between its ends. The draw strap **64** is preferably attached to the rear panel **48** of the upper cover **16** at its center via a pair of rivets **72**. In use, the skier wraps the VELCRO ® end **66** of the strap **64** around the portion of the skis **12** positioned in the upper cover **16**, loops the end **66** through the ring **68**, and folds the strap **64** over itself to engage the hook and loop portions **66, 70** of the VELCRO ® fastener.

FIG. **4** also illustrates an exterior pole retention strap **74** and a cooperatively positioned ring **76** used to lash a skier's ski poles to the exterior of the upper cover **16**. The retention strap **74** extends for the cover **16**, preferably being attached at the seem between a front panel **42** and a central panel **46** proximate to a top end **78** of the upper cover **16**. In an exemplary embodiment, the retention strap **74** comprises a 1.5 inch (3.8 centimeter) wide nylon webbing having a length of approximately 6.0 inches (15.3 cm).

A looped segment of webbing **80** is sewed between the opposing front panel **40** and central panel **44** with the ring **76** inserted though the loop **80** to secure the ring **76** to the upper cover **16**. In this cooperative position, the skier can insert the strap **74** though the ring **76** to lash the poles to the cover **16**. The ring **76** desirably has an endless half-circle configuration comprised of a durable plastic material, such as the type of ring commercially available from National Molding, Inc.

The pole retention strap **74** further includes a fastener **82** to secure the strap **74** in place after being threaded through the ring **76**. Although FIG. **4** illustrates the fastener **82** as comprising cooperating hook and loop sections of a VELCRO ® strip sewed on the retention strap **74**, other fasteners, such as, for example, snaps, ties and the like can also be used.

In addition, it is contemplated other retainer mechanisms could be used as well to secure the ski poles to the carrying device **10**. For instance, the upper cover **16** could include at least one hook attached to the exterior of the upper cover which either interacts with the ski pole handles or interconnects with the ski poles **14**. In connection with the latter hook arrangement, the ski poles **14** could snap into the structure of the hook. Alternatively, the upper cover **16** could be formed to hold the poles within the cover, thus eliminating the need for an exterior pole retaining mechanism.

FIGS. **4** and **5** further illustrates a pair of support rings **84** used to couple the carrying straps **26** to the upper cover **16**. A pair of looped webbing segments **86** are sewed and/or attached by rivets **88** to the central panels **44, 46** with a support ring **84** positioned between the fold of the webbing segment **86** in a manner well known in the art. Each ring **84** desirably extends above the top end of the upper cover and preferably is positioned completely above the top end **78** to allow the ring **84** to rotate about a section of the ring positioned in the fold of the webbing **86** without the ring **84** binding against the central panel **44, 46**.

In an exemplary embodiment as illustrated by FIGS. **4** and **5**, the support rings **84** have generally triangular shapes. However, those skilled in the art will appreciate that other shape rings can also be used. The triangular rings preferably are 1.0 inch (2.5 cm) plastic triangular rings commercially available for Nexxus or for National Molding, Inc.

Lower Cover

FIG. **6** illustrates the lower cover **18** from a front side elevational view. The lower cover **18** is formed between a pair of mirror-image halves **90, 92**, each of which define a pocket **94, 96** of sufficient size to receive a conventional heel binding **24** of the ski **12** to which the skier attaches the lower cover **18**. However, those skill in the art could readily customize the pockets **94, 96** defined by the lower cover **18** for any size bindings, such as, for example, larger ski racing bindings. The halves **90, 92** are desirably coupled together in a position placing the pockets **94, 96** in opposition. That is, the two halves **90, 92** define mirror-image pockets **94, 96** positioned opposite one another on opposite sides of the central vertical plane **38**.

In an exemplary embodiment illustrated by FIGS. **6** and **7**, the halves **90, 92** of the lower cover **18** are formed by a pair of front panels **98**, four central panels **100** and a rear panel **102** which are sewed together along common edges. Each front panel **98** has a shape complementary to that of the profile of the ski heel binding **24**, and preferably has a generally triangular shape. The rear panel **102** has generally a diamond shape of a size generally equal to that defined by the two front panels **98** when positioned in a plane with their long edges juxtaposed. Each central panel **100** has a generally rectangular shape which extends between the rear panel **102** and the front panel **98**.

The panels **98, 100, 102** of the lower cover **18** preferably are also formed of a lightweight, weaved, flexible material, such as, for example, a nylon or canvas cloth. In an exemplary embodiment, the panels **98, 100, 102** are desirably formed of Nylon 1000 Denier Cordura, having a water-proof or water-resistant coating applied to one side. The desired Nylon Cordura is commercially available from DuPont. It is also contemplated that a layer of padding material could be sewed into the lower cover **18** to further protect the heel bindings **24**.

As FIGS. **6** and **7** illustrate, a border **104** preferably edges the outer edges of the lower cover **18** after the panels **98, 100, 102** are sewed together. The border extends around the periphery of the lower cover **18**, finishing the edges of the panels **98, 100, 102** for a neat appearance and preventing the edges of the panels **98, 100, 102** from fraying or from ripping. The border **104** preferably comprises a nylon binding or tape folded in half with the outer edges of the panels **98, 100, 102** positioned in the fold of the nylon binding. Positioned accordingly, the border **104** is sewed onto the panels **98, 100, 102**. In an exemplary embodiment, a 0.75 inch (1.9 cm) wide nylon binding is used to edge the panels.

FIG. **6** illustrates a fastening means **106** for quickly and easily securing the lower cover **18** to the skis **12** after a skier positions the lower cover **18** around the heel bindings **24**. The fastening means **106** is preferably positioned proximate to the elongated edges **108** of the front panels **98**. In an exemplary embodiment, the fastener means **106** comprises a hook portion **110** and a loop portion **112** of a hook-and-loop fastener **106**, such as VELCRO ® available commercially, and is disposed along the elongated edges **108** of the front panels **98** on opposing surfaces; the front panels **98** preferably overlap when positioned around the heel bindings **24** so that the hook portion **110** and the loop portion **106** of the VELCRO ® strip **106** can interconnect.

Again, it is understood that although FIG. **6** illustrates the fastener means **106** as a VELCRO ® strip, other fastener means, such as, for example, zippers, snaps, and the like can be used as well. Moreover, the panels **98, 100, 102** could be sewed together in a sleeve-like fashion and sized to slip over the heel bindings **24** with fastener means, such as, for example, elastic bands or draw strings securing the lower cover **18** to the skis **12** and over the heel bindings **24**.

FIG. **6** also illustrates an exterior pole retention strap **114** and a cooperatively positioned ring **116** used to lash a skier's poles **14** to the exterior of the lower cover **18**. The retention strap **114** extends for the cover **18**, preferably being attached proximate to the elongated edge **108** of the front panel **98** at about the center of the of the lower cover **18**. In an exemplary embodiment, the retention strap **114** comprises a 1.5 inch (3.8 centimeter) wide nylon webbing having a length of approximately 5.0 inches (12.7 cm).

A looped webbing segment **118** is sewed onto the other front panel **98** directly opposite the retention strap **114** with the ring **116** inserted though the loop **118** to secure the ring **116** to the lower cover **18**. In this cooperative position, the skier can insert the strap **114** though the ring **116** to lash the poles **14** to the lower cover **18**. The ring **116** desirably has an endless half-circle configuration comprised of a durable plastic material, such as the type of ring commercially available from National Molding, Inc.

The pole retention strap **114** further includes a fastener **120** to secure the strap **114** in place after being threaded through the ring **116**. Although FIG. **6** illustrates the fastener **120** as comprising cooperating hook and loop sections of a VELCRO ® strip sewed onto the retention strap **114**, other fasteners, such as, for example, snaps, ties and the like can also be used.

Again, it is contemplated other retainer mechanisms could be used as well to secure the ski poles **14** to the carrying device **10**, such as, for example, the hooks as discussed above. Alternatively, the lower cover **18** could be formed to hold the poles **14** within the cover **18**, thus eliminating the need for an exterior pole retaining mechanism.

FIGS. **6** and **7** further illustrates a first pair of support rings **124** used to couple the carrying straps **26** to the lower cover **18**. The supporting rings **124** are positioned at the transverse corners **127** of the generally diamond-shaped lower cover **18**. Two looped webbing segments **126** are sewed and/or attached by rivets **128** to the central panels **100** with a support ring **124** positioned between the fold of each webbing segment **126** in a manner well known in the art.

The lower cover **18** further includes a second pair of support rings **130** for securing a bundled carrying device **10** around the skier's waist, as discussed below. A second pair of looped webbing segments **132** are sewed and/or attached by rivets **134** to the rear panel **102** at an upper edge **136** and a lower edge **138**. Each support ring **130** is positioned between the fold of one webbing segment **132**, thereby attaching the support ring **130** to the lower cover **18**. Each support ring **130** attached to the second webbing segments **132** desirably extends away from either the upper edge **136** and the lower edge **138**, and preferably is positioned completely beyond either the upper edge **136** and lower edge **138** to allow the ring **130** to rotate about a section of the ring **130** positioned in the fold of the webbing segment **132** without the ring **130** binding against the rear panel **102**.

In an exemplary embodiment as illustrated by FIGS. **6** and **7**, the support rings **124, 130** have generally triangular shapes. However, those skilled in the art will appreciate that other rings shapes can also be used. The triangular rings **124, 130** preferably are 1.0 inch (2.5 cm) plastic triangular rings commercially available for Nexxus or for National Molding, Inc.

As FIG. **7** illustrates, the lower cover **18** further includes a pair of VELCRO ® loop portion patches **140** sewed onto the rear panel **102** adjacent the upper and lower edges **136, 138** of the rear panel **102**. As will be discussed in detail below, the VELCRO ® patches **140** cooperate with the VELCRO ® hoop portion **110** attached to the elongated edge **108** of the front panel **98**, as will be discussed in detail below.

Carrying Straps

FIG. **8** illustrates the carrying strap **26** comprising a first webbing strip **150** and a second webbing strip **152** connected together by a tabular **154**. The tabular **154** preferably is a plastic tabular of the type commercially available from National Molding, Inc. The tabular **154** allows the skier to adjust the length of the carrying straps **26**, as discussed below.

A snap hook **156** is attached at one end of the first webbing strip **150** by threading the strip end **158** through an aperture **160** of the hook **156**, folding the webbing strip **150** upon itself, and sewing the end **158** to the webbing strip **150**, as known in the art. Consequently, the snap hook **156** can rotate about the loop formed in the webbing strip **150**. The opposite end of

the first webbing strip **150** is attached to the tabular **154** in a similar manner.

A second snap hook **162** is attached to the one end **164** of the second webbing strip **152** in a manner similar to that described above. The second end of the second webbing strip **152** loops through a pair of apertures **166, 168** defined by the tabular **154** to secure the second webbing strip **152** to the tabular **154**, as known in the art.

In an exemplary embodiment, the snap hooks **156, 162** comprise swivel snap hooks of the type commercially available from National Molding, Inc., to allow the straps to rotate relative to the covers **16, 18**, and to reduce binding of the carrying straps **26**. The webbing **150, 152** preferably comprises 1.5 inch (3.8 cm) wide nylon webbing.

Method of Using Carrying Device

When using the ski carrying device **10**, as illustrated either by FIG. **2** or by FIG. **3**, the skier places the bottoms **22** of the skis **12** together in a juxtaposed position. The skier then places the upper cover **16** around the toe bindings **20** and draws the skies together using the drawing strap **64**. That is, the skier places the skis against the rear panel **48** of the upper cover **16**, wraps the end of the draw strap **64** around the skis **12** and threads the draw strap **64** through the ring **68**. The skier then secures the draw strap **64** in this position by pressing the cooperating VELCRO ® strips together. After drawing the skis **12** together, the skier snugly pulls the upper cover **16** around the toe bindings **20**, placing one toe binding **20** in each pocket **34, 36** of the upper cover **16**. The skier subsequently presses the overlapping front panels **40, 42** together to engage the cooperating VELCRO ® strips **60, 62** to secure the upper cover **16** over the toe bindings **20** and onto the skis **12**.

The skier also places the lower cover **18** over heel bindings **24** by wrapping the lower cover **18** around the heel bindings **24**. The skier adjusts the lower cover **18** to position one heel binding **24** in each pocket **94, 96** of the lower cover **18** and pulls the lower cover **18** taut to a position where the front covers **98** overlap. The skier then presses together the overlapping front covers **98** to engage the cooperating VELCRO ® strips **110, 112** and, thus, secures the lower cover **18** over the heel bindings **24** and onto the skis **12**.

After placing the covers **16, 18** on the skis **12**, the skier may attach the ski poles **14** to the carrying device **10**. The skier first places the ski poles **14** together. Positioning the poles **14** parallel to and against the skis **12**, the skier wraps the pole retention straps **74, 114** around the poles **14**, threads the straps through the corresponding rings **76, 116**, and presses the VELCRO ® section **82, 120** of the retainer straps **74, 114** together to hold the straps **74, 114** in place.

The skier also connects the carrying straps **26** to the covers **16, 18**. Specifically, the skier snaps the snap hooks **156** attached to first webbing strips **150** onto the triangular rings **84** of the upper cover **16** and snaps the opposite snap hooks **162** to the triangular rings **124** positioned at the transverse corners **127** of the lower cover **18**. Attached accordingly, each strap **26** extends between the upper cover **16** and the lower cover **18**.

As FIG. **2** illustrates, the skier pulls each strap **26** over a shoulder to position the skis **12** against the skier's back. The skier can adjust the position of the skis and the looseness of the straps **26** via the tabulars **154** located proximate the skier's chest when the skier wears the carrying device **10**. The skier can tighten the straps **26** by pulling down on the second webbing strip **152** threaded through the tabular **154**, or can loosen the straps **26** by pushing up on the tabular **154**, as known in the art.

Alternatively, as illustrated in FIG. **3**, the skier can wear the carrying device **10** in a fashion skewing the skis **12** at a slight angle so that the ends of the skis **12** do not interfere with the skier as he or she walks. For the skier to wear the carrying device **10** in this posture, the skier attaches one carrying strap **26** between the upper cover **16** and the lower cover **18** such that the strap **26** extends diagonally across the skier's body. The skier wraps the other strap **26** around his or her waist. In this position, the second strap **26** attaches to the rings **124** positioned at the transverse corners **127** of the lower cover **18**. The second strap **26** positioned around the skier's waist also enables the skier to wear a carrying case **170** to store coins, a wallet, sunglasses or the like. The skier can adjust each strap **26** as described above. With either arrangement, however, the carrying device **10** retains the skis **12** and ski poles **14** in a generally vertical position on the skier's body.

The skier using the carrying device **10** easily transports his or her ski equipment without using his or her hands and in an unobtrusive manner. The skier carrying the skis **12** on his or her back is less likely to strike another person or other objects with the skis **12**. Moreover, the skier can keep the skis **12** on his or her back when buying a lift ticket or when walking through crowded area at the ski resort, thus reducing the number of times the skier sets the ski **12** against a wall or on the ground. Consequently, the skier is less likely to damage the skis' edges and bottoms and the skis' bindings.

FIG. **9** illustrates that the skier may quickly and easily convert the carrying device **10** into a hip pocket which the skier may wear around his or her waist. To convert the carrying device **10** to a hip pocket, the skier removes the covers **16, 18** from the skis **12** and preferably removes the straps **26** from the covers **16, 18** by disconnecting the snap hooks **156, 162** from the triangle rings **84, 124**. The skier then places the transverse corner **127** of the lower cover **18**, proximate to the front panel **98** having the looped VELCRO ® portion **112**, into the opposing pocket **96** of the lower cover **18**. In this manner, the skier completely folds the first half **90** of the lower cover **18** into the second half **92** to form a generally triangular-shaped pouch.

The skier then places one strap **26** inside the upper cover **16** and rolls the upper cover **16** into a small bundle. The skier places the rolled cover **16** into the pouch formed by the lower cover **18**. Preferably, the pouch has a sufficient size to receive other articles, such as, for example, sunglasses, maps, sun-block, lip gloss or the like, in addition to the upper cover **16** and strap **26**.

An elongated edge **108** of the lower cover front panel **98** flaps over the pouch to cover its contents. The hooked VELCRO ® portion **110** of the elongated edge **108** engages the looped VELCRO ® patches **140** positioned of the exterior of the rear panel **102** to secure the front panel edge **108** over the pouch opening. The triangular rings **130** positioned at the upper and lower edges **136, 138** of the rear panel **102** extend outwardly with the lower cover **18** compacted accordingly. The skier then attaches the second strap **26** to one of the exposed rings **130**, wraps the strap **26** around his or her waist, and attaches the other end of the strap **26** to the other exposed triangular ring **130**. The skier can tighten

or loosen the strap by using the tabular **154**, as described above.

Thus, the skier may easily convert the carrying device **10** to a hip pocket and may wear the hip pocket around his or her waist while skiing. The carrying device **10** need not be stored in a locker or locked to a post when not being used. Moreover, the carrying device **10**, strapped to the skier's waist, is readily available for use at any location on the ski slope or in the skiing resort.

In an exemplary embodiment, the carrying device **10** folds into a triangular shaped pocket with a flat central panel **100** exposed when worn by the skier. The skier may attach identifying indicia, such as embroidered letters, to the flat panel **100** to distinguish the skier's carrying device **10** from like carrying devices **10** owned by other skiers.

Although this invention has been described in terms of a certain preferred embodiment, other embodiments apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art are also within the scope of this invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is intended to be defined only by the claims which follow.

What is claimed is:

1. A ski carrying device for carrying a pair of skis on a skier's body, each ski having a toe binding and a heel binding, said ski carrying device comprising:

an upper cover comprising a first upper pocket formed by a first portion of an upper rear panel and a first upper front panel which is attached to said rear panel by a first upper central panel, and an opposing second upper pocket formed by a second portion of said upper rear panel and a second upper front panel which is attached to said rear panel by a second upper central panel, said first upper pocket being sized to receive one of the toe bindings of the skis and said second upper pocket being sized to receive the other toe binding of the skis each pocket being configured to snugly fit about a rear end of the corresponding toe binding, said upper cover further comprising a fastener to secure said upper cover to the skis;

a lower cover comprising a first lower pocket formed by a first portion of a lower rear panel and a first lower front panel which is attached to said lower rear panel by a first lower central panel, and an opposing second lower pocket formed by a second portion of said lower rear panel and a second lower front panel which is attached to said lower rear panel by a second lower central panel, said first lower pocket being configured to receive one of the heel bindings of the skis and said second lower pocket being sized to receive the other heel binding of the skies, each pocket being configured to snugly fit about a rear end of the corresponding heel binding, said lower cover further comprising a fastener to secure said lower cover to the skis; and

a first strap and a second strap, each strap connecting to and extending between said upper cover and said lower cover.

2. The ski carrying device of claim **1**, wherein said fasteners of said upper cover and said lower cover are selected from a group of quick engaging fasteners consisting of hook-and-loop fasteners, zippers, snaps, and elastic bands.

3. The ski carrying device of claim **1**, wherein said upper cover and said lower cover are each formed of a lightweight, flexible material.

4. The ski carrying device of claim **3**, wherein said flexible material comprises a nylon cloth.

5. The ski carrying device of claim **1**, wherein said upper cover comprises a pair of edges positioned proximate to said pockets, each edge being formed with one of said front panels, said edges further being positioned to overlay each other with said upper cover surrounding the toe bindings with the bottoms of the skis juxtaposed, and said fastener of said upper cover being position to attaches said edges together.

6. The ski carrying device of claim **1**, wherein at least one of said straps is removably connected to said upper cover and to said lower cover.

7. The ski carrying device of claim **6**, wherein one of said straps connects to said upper cover and to said lower cover via a snap hook and ring interconnection.

8. The ski carrying device of claim **7**, wherein said snap hook swivels.

9. The ski carrying device of claim **1**, wherein said lower cover is configured to fold into a pouch having a sufficient size to receive said upper cover, said upper and lower covers forming a compact bundle with said upper cover inserted into said pouch formed by said lower cover.

10. The ski carrying device of claim **9**, wherein said strap is removably connected to said upper cover and to said lower cover such that said strap functions as a shoulder strap with said strap connected to said upper and to lower covers, and functions as a waist band with said strap connected to said lower cover at both ends of the strap.

11. The ski carrying device of claim **1** additionally comprising a strap to draw and to hold said skis together with said bottoms juxtaposed.

12. The ski carrying device of claim **1** additionally comprising a retention mechanism to hold and secure a pair of ski poles in a position generally parallel to the skis to which said ski carrying device is connected.

13. The ski carrying device of claim **12**, wherein said retention mechanism comprises a pair of strap and ring connectors cooperatively positioned on said covers such that each strap belts across the ski poles and loops through one of said rings to secure the poles to the covers.

14. The ski carrying device of claim **1**, wherein each strap includes an adjustment mechanism.

15. The ski carrying device of claim **14**, wherein said strap adjustment mechanism comprises a tabular.

16. A method of carrying skis in an unobtrusive position upon a skier's body, said method comprising the steps of:

juxtaposing the bottom surfaces of the skis such that the corresponding sections of the bindings interconnect;

providing a ski carrying device of the type having an upper cover and a lower cover interconnected by a pair of straps, said upper cover including a pair of opposing pockets formed by a rear panel and pair of front panels which are each attach to said rear panel by a central panel, and said lower cover also including a pair of opposing pockets formed by a rear panel and pair of front panels which are each attach to said rear panel by a central panel, said upper and lower covers each including a fastener to secure said covers to the skis;

inserting one toe binding into one pocket of said upper cover and inserting the opposite toe binding into the opposite pocket of said upper cover;

wrapping the upper cover around the toe bindings of the skis such that the upper cover tightly fits around the rear ends of the toe bindings;

interconnecting the fastener to secure the upper cover to the skis;

inserting one heel binding into one pocket of said lower cover and inserting the opposite heel binding into the opposite pocket of said lower cover;

wrapping the lower cover around the heel binding of the skis such that the lower cover tightly fits about the rear ends of the heel bindings;

interconnecting the fastener to secure the lower cover to the skis;

attaching said pair of straps to the upper cover and to the lower cover;

positioning the straps over the skier's shoulders with the skis resting against the skier's back; and

positioning the skis in a generally unobtrusive position, slightly skewed from vertical.

17. The method of claim **16** additionally comprising the steps of:

removing said ski carrying device from the skis;

inserting one side portion of said lower cover into an opposing side portion of said lower cover to compact said lower cover and form a pouch;

inserting said upper cover and one of said straps into said pouch formed by said lower cover; and

positioning said lower cover pouch at the skier's waist and attaching said second strap to said compacted lower cover to secure said lower cover pouch to said skier's waist.

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